

## TOP NEWS

# 'China cannot flex muscles worldwide like US'

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**K**UALA LUMPUR — China will not dominate the region in future, contrary to fears among some as it will have to contend with Asean, Japan and India, which have intrinsic strengths, former United Nations senior official and Indian politician Shashi Tharoor said yesterday.

The former under secretary-general for communications and public information, who narrowly missed becoming secretary-general of the body in 2006, did not see China exercising the kind of clout in the 21st century that United States did in the 20th century simply because of the presence of the three entities.

"I don't see that (China's dominance) in the 21st century," he said, adding that the next 20 to 30 years would determine whether this century would see the rise of an "Asian century" or if China would stand alone as the major economic power worldwide.

He was speaking at a luncheon talk titled "India and the New World Order" here yesterday on the sidelines of the three-day Global Malayalee 2015 conference being held here until today. The event is organised by the All Malaysia Malayalee Association.

Shashi, who is MP for Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, was replying a question on whether the

spread of Chinese economic influence around the world would indicate its predominance in a new world order.

His comments come in the wake of increasing Chinese belligerence in the South China Sea where it appears to be flexing its muscles through naval expansion centred around the Spratly islands.

The disputed archipelago of islands, reefs and atolls lie off the coasts of Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Shashi also spoke on a range of issues that included the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, which is causing anxiety among other members in its plural society and endemic corruption in the sub-continent.

On the rise of fundamental Hinduism in India, he said the right-wing Hindu organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), was setting a dangerous precedent by thinking that it could have its way based on the belief that it put Prime Minister Narendra Modi into power.

"They are wrong. One third of Modi's support had nothing to do with the Hindutva (belief that the Indian subcontinent is the homeland of the Hindus) vote, he said of increasing RSS intolerance of other religions in India.

Asked about the similarity in plurality between India and Malaysia by a participant, Shashi said he fervently believed that such societies should remain so, with every religious community having the right to worship as it pleased.



Shashi speaking to Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan, wife of former health minister Tun V.T. Sambanthan. — Picture by Azneal Ishak